

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

Fourteenth District, Michigan
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

FOR RELEASE:
May 21, 2003

CONTACT: Dena Graziano
202-226-6888

CONYERS APPLAUDS JUDICIARY COMMITTEE **FOR RECOGNIZING THE HORROR OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE**

Congressman John Conyers, Jr., issued the following statement regarding today's Judiciary Committee Markup on H.Res. 193, "Reaffirming Support of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and Anticipating the 15th Anniversary of the Enactment of the Genocide Convention Implementation Act of 1987 (the Proxmire Act) on November 4, 2003":

"I am pleased to have the opportunity to voice my support for this resolution which reaffirms the American people's condemnation of genocide and recognizes our enactment the Genocide Convention in 1988.

In this resolution, we seek to do a simple thing: to rededicate our nation's commitment to opposing and eradicating genocide. The 20th Century was plagued with numerous incidences of genocide beginning with the Armenian genocide in 1915, and followed by the Holocaust, and genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, the Balkans and Iraq among others. Unfortunately, great debates persist about the history surrounding each of these incidents. Yet we do know that systematic mass murder of a specific people occurred in each case.

For years, Members of Congress and people within the Administration have shied away from recognizing the Armenian genocide in particular. Yet there is ample historical evidence - including that of American eyewitnesses - that Armenians were forced from their homes on short notice, were sent on death marches across the country, were massacred along the way, and were starved because they were provided no food or water on the march or in the inadequate relocation camps in the Syrian desert. If that is not intentional infliction of death or harm upon a group of people, I don't know what is.

Approximately a million or more people died.. Before these events, the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire was between 1 and 2 million. By 1923, only about 40,000 Armenians were left. Most had been killed under the relocation plans or had fled as refugees to other nations, including our own. This is a reality we cannot ignore or shirk away from for political expediency.

If we intend to prevent genocide, we must begin by identifying genocide for what it is. If we fail to recognize historical genocidal events, we not only do a disservice to those who died and the survivors, but we also create conditions where genocide can continue with impunity. In the 21st Century, we must recognize the global horrors of the past and continue to move towards reconciliation. We must fervently seek to enforce our law on genocide by prosecuting U.S. nationals who have engaged in such acts. And we must continue working with the international community to bring other perpetrators to justice through international and foreign courts. With strong enforcement of our laws and the Genocide Convention, we can eradicate genocide and prevent its recurrence in the 21st Century."

##JUD-108-5/21-03##